The Mystique of the Mother In the Poetry of Walt Whitman and Daisaku Ikeda

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Abstract

A comparative estimate of the concept of the mother in the poetry of Walt Whitman and Daisaku Ikeda reveals the use of overarching paradigms rooted in the transcendent Quaker and Mahayana Buddhist traditions and the techniques drawn from Hegelian dialectics and Lotus Sutra orality. These traditions and techniques interpenetrate their weltanschauung, point of view, style, rhetoric and metaphors. Both poets represent the perfect mother in cosmic terms within the enlightened space of spiritual democracy, attributing to her virtues such as purity, love and hope. The ideal mother in their poetry functions as a progenitor, protector and peacemaker unencumbered by the conflicting ideologies of modern times. Using the literary devices of kleos, monologue and interrogation they alternate between an expansive tone and a colloquial voice eulogizing the concept of the mother. Their poetry is also imbued with the tragic consequences of war, which prompts a desire for world peace and harmony. Believing in the eternity of life they are able to confront the inescapable fact of death with equanimity, encompassing the

world in a grand poetic embrace of paternal love. Both poets seek the perfection of the individual and a better world, with the mother at the center, which only poetry can help identify and configure.

The figure of the mother dominates the emotional and spiritual landscape of Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-), once more reconfirming our belief in the life-giving power of the matriarch. Both create the icon of the mother beyond ideology encompassing the cosmos, representing a moral world beyond categories, suggesting a vision that is hard to ignore. Whitman employs a transcendent Quakerism, while Ikeda uses the egalitarian principles of the Lotus Sutra to create a nobility of character and freedom of the spirit where the dignity of the human being is once more recognized.[1] The idealized mother, possessing both physical and spiritual qualities, seems to represent the real hope for man and becomes the last refuge of a decadent society. The poet s cosmic love fuses with the love of the mother, imbuing the poetic impulse with extraordinary powers to heal a diseased world.

The poetry of Whitman and Ikeda create a cosmic vision of the mother within the enlightened and democratic traditions of Europe, the egalitarian and positive traditions of the East (including India, China and Japan). Their poetry also functions within the literary traditions of Europe stretching from the Greeks to the present and the literary traditions of the East extending from the *Rigveda* to the present. Rooted within the Christian-Hegelian and Buddhist-oral traditions, the analytical and didactic qualities of both the poets become apparent. Both use the grand style, expansive tone, colloquial idiom, eulogy, spiritual democracy, and didactic discourse to create a moral vision of the woman as mother, matriarch and protector of life, culture and environment. The influence of the Quaker-Christian and Lotus Sutra-Buddhist traditions on the two poets, the

historical idea of *nomen dignitatis*, and the deep influence of Whitman on postwar Japanese poets especially Ikeda, are some of the aspects that imbue the conceptual framework of the essay and become a rationale for a comparative estimate of the two poets.

Eulogizing the Mother

The image of the mother both as concept and symbol becomes central to the poetry of Whitman and Ikeda, intermixing with personal reminiscences and literary narrative to create a modern icon of endurance and refuge. Praising the different roles mothers play in a complex society becomes the central preoccupation of both poets. They employ the literary device of eulogy or *kleos* to draw attention to the indomitable, primordial and winsome personality that mothers possess. The eulogy or panegyrics are both a part of the Greek and Buddhist traditions and are intricately woven in the theme of the poems. However it is hard to say if the Chinese *syo* or Japanese *choka* verse forms have influenced or shaped Ikeda s style in the longer narratives like the Mother or Symphony of the Great Noble Mothers. [2]

The genre of praise poem represented through unequivocal eulogy or homage seems to be rooted in the ancient Buddhist and Greek traditions.[3] Seemingly praise poems allowed the writer to increase his admiration or gratitude for the object praised, thereby revealing those very qualities in him that he admired in his subject. The simple and clean sentiments of praise poems gave the freedom to the poet to address and capture a larger audience. The reader can quite easily share in the dazzle and flavor of the praise.[4] It is possible to argue that though the eulogy to the mother in both Whitman and Ikeda has an autobiographical base, it may also have its origin in the literary traditions of the *kleos*, *syo*, *choka* or the

Buddhist panegyrics. However the intense eulogies to the mother in both poets are unique in the annals of poetic representation in the east and the west.

The Mother Mystique Perfect and Noble Mothers

Both Whitman and Ikeda have attempted to represent the mother as an ordinary person who acquires pre-eminence through her resilience, resourcefulness and courage. Some literary critics have pointed out that Whitman s concept of the ideal or superior human was so pervasive that it even affected continental philosophy, influencing Nietzsche s concept of the *ubermensch*. They argue that if Nietzsche could have read Emerson, then there is a remote possibility that he would have also read Whitman.[5] Nietzsche however had no sympathy for the weak while Whitman was seeped in the Quaker tradition, which expressed a genuine sympathy, verging on compassion, for those who sought to harness their inner light. Quakerism was both an extension of Puritan ideas, which attempted to purify the Church of its antiquated rituals while at the same time it was a revolt against Puritan endorsement of authoritarian clergy. Whitman took the Quaker tradition further by not only identifying himself intellectually with the concept of inner light but also expanding it to create a new kind of universalism, a subtle belief in the spiritual identity of the universe which allowed the soul to migrate into some higher being. In this sense his transcendental Quakerism was closer to the Hindu belief of transmigration.[6] However we must not at any time ignore the fact that Whitman s Christian mysticism, his spiritual transcendentalism or his humanitarian universalism, invariably forced him to return to the inner light of Quakerism even when he took extended flights into eastern mysticism and philosophy.

Though Whitman arrives at the concept of the superior being through a Christian tradition, Ikeda realizes the notion of the greater cosmic self through his belief in Buddhism.[7] Together they attempt to fuse this eternal self with the concept of universal life either through the Buddhist idea of causality (Ikeda) or the psychological moment of d□ vu (Whitman). The two poets use the concept of eternity, as Buddhist life force or Christian soul, and attempt to realize it as a celebration of the present. Also since both are able to celebrate life in all its diversity they are also able to celebrate death, which is just another point in the greater representation of cosmic life. It is within this context that we must see the concept of the mother in the poetry of Whitman and Ikeda, something cosmic and elemental that transcends the mundane reality of day-to-day life.

Though critics of Whitman see his mothers as dull stereotypic lacking individual character, Whitman himself was not disheartened by such scathing criticism. He was so deeply involved in constructing the identity of a new American nation, more so the identity of her male and female subjects, that he never faltered in creating a grand vision of their intense individualism and elemental sensuality.

Some critics agree with D.H. Lawrence that Whitman s mothers are largely functional creatures, just muscle and womb and, therefore, rather depressing beings. His mothers are stereotypical, lacking individuality and wrought in the conservative environment of Victorianism.[8] However in his poem Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking we see a more positive picture of the mother. Whitman in fact asserts in *Democratic Vistas* that women are a part of the sane athletic maternity which has made them superior to the man. His praise for their maternal capability may not be so indubitably represented in poetry as it is in prose, though the feminists find his tone rather patronizing even in his poetry.

In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman writes,

> I say a new founded literature, not merely to copy and reflect existing surfaces or pander to what is called taste not only to amuse, pass away time, celebrate the beautiful, the refined, the past, or exhibit technical, rhythmic, or grammatical dexterity but a literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men and, as perhaps the most precious of its results, achieving the entire redemption of woman out of these incredible holds and webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion and thus insuring to the States a strong and sweet Female Race of perfect Mothers is what is needed.[9]

Whitman believes in creating a new literature, which unites science and religion and provides redemption of women out of the drudgery of household chores. He realizes the webs of silliness and dyspeptic depletion that mothers are subjected to and thus wants to construct a nation where a strong and sweet Female Race of Perfect Mothers can emerge.

In a poem A Thought of the Clef of Eternity (1860), Whitman configures a mother s love as central to the entire pantheon of human loves including sexual love. The sustaining power of a mothers breast will,

> Always [be] near and always divine to me, her true child and son, whatever comes.[10]

The representation of the mother as encompassing both the physical and spiritual spheres is unique to Whitman as it allows him to construct the mother as a vast

similitude interlocking the cosmos. And this is unique in the Victorian era when there was a reticence to deal with female sexuality and recognize centrality of the role of women especially mothers as progenitors and sustainers of the human race.

It is rather difficult for Whitman to discuss the sexuality of the mother in any other form except in the role of an instructor and guide. In Section 5 of I Sing the Body Electric Whitman encourages women to construct an identity that includes both the physical and the spiritual aspects:

> Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and is the exit of the rest,
> You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.[11]

Whitman privileges the woman with the notion of enclosing and exiting not only body and soul but also others. This is a concept also exemplified in Ikeda s poem Mother where the mother becomes the sanctuary for a tired and lost world. Ikeda writes,

> Our environmentally polluted, graying society,
> Our suffocating cities
> Maddened by noise,
> And our immured world,
> Offer us no sunlit path.
> We despair to find an exit.
> Mother earth, if you did not sustain us
> We would lose planet earth,
> We would be unable to return,

And wander around forever.

The suffocation and sickness of the urban world can only be mitigated by a mother s love. Ikeda s sentiments are the sentiments of Whitman in an environmentally polluted, graying society where mothers become an anchor, a sanctuary for lost souls.

Both Whitman and Ikeda realize the personal magnetism, the sunny temperament and native dignity mothers possess and attempt to capture this mystique both in poetry and prose. Perhaps both poets also tap the rich resources of their remembered past to construct their image of the mother. Whitman, for example, remembers his mother describing an old woman of eighty, called Peacemaker, thus,

> My dear mother once described to me a resplendent person, down on Long Island, whom she knew in early days. She was known by the name of Peacemaker. She was well toward eighty years old, of happy and sunny temperament, had always lived on a farm, and was very neighborly, sensible and discreet, an invariable and welcom d favorite, especially with young married women. She had numerous children, and grandchildren. She was uneducated, but possess d a native dignity. She had come to be a tacitly agreed upon domestic regulator, judge, settler of difficulties, shepherdess, and reconciler in the land. She was a sight to draw near and look upon, with her large figure, her profuse snow-white hair, (uncoif d by any head-dress or cap,) dark eyes, clear complexion, sweet breath, and peculiar personal magnetism.[12]

Whitman s acceptance and praise of an aging mother in a culture where youth

and individualism is celebrated, was undoubtedly revolutionary and partakes of the ancient tradition of the *Rigveda* where the great inherent power of the mother is eulogized.[13] In Beautiful Women he states,

> Women sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,
> The young are beautiful but the old are more beautiful than the young.[14]

Whitman is painting the image of female aging in a positive light, attributing qualities of inner beauty even when the body is growing old. The attempt to underscore the graceful beauty of an aging woman is to glorify the image of the mother as fulfillment and completion.

Ikeda too values this personal magnetism and peacemaking qualities of mothers. In Symphony of the Great Noble Mothers he writes,

> My mother s name was Ichi
> And her mother and father
> Seemingly expressed their wish as follows,
> To become most happy and
> If she gave birth to children
> They should become number one,
> At the top, whichever it may be,
> And render great service to society.

Elaborating upon the personality of his own mother Ichi in an essay entitled My Mother Ikeda recalls her as a great woman, and homemaker who was well-organized and methodical. This was the reason the entire family was able to succeed in spite of their poverty. According to Ikeda,

I never saw her take a break or a nap once. I assume that she was too busy to even stop and think about what she lived for. But she excelled as a homemaker. She couldn t possibly have done the huge amount of housework she did and keep us fed and neatly dressed if she hadn t been well-organized and methodical. She was so efficient it was almost artistic. There was no movement wasted, and nothing was put in a certain place without meaning and purpose. She was not exceptional in any way, but I consider my mother to have been a great woman.

Life was hard for women in those days. Men dominated society, allowing women few opportunities and choices. However, my mother drew on her inner strength and endlessly gave for the sake of her family in an extremely tough environment. She used to call us the champions of poverty, and she always stayed cheerful, never complaining. Whatever I was going through, her presence gave me great hope and courage.

Ikeda recalls the inner strength of his mother in a tough environment dominated by men. It was in this society that she prudently managed her house giving hope and courage to all. He concludes the essay with the brave assertion that his mother though ordinary and unassuming was indeed a victor in life. Ikeda writes,

My mother was a very ordinary person who seemed content to live a quiet life in her own small corner of the world. And yet, from the plain, unassuming way she lived, I learned many important things about life. From her example, I strongly feel that there is no reason for a mother to feel at a disadvantage or think badly of herself just because she doesn t have a high level of education. A woman who tries to learn from

everything and has the confidence to fully use the wisdom she gains in her daily life will give an irreplaceable example to her children.

My mother was able to say to me, just a week before she died I have won in life. How many people can say that with confidence?[15]

Ikeda identifies his mother as a very ordinary person who lacked high level of education but compensated it by a day-to-day wisdom and exemplary character. It seems Ikeda uses his mother as a model to create for his concept of the ideal mother and this forces him to express his debt of gratitude not only to his mentor Josei Toda but also to all earnest mother of Kamata who were working hard to bring world peace to the propagation of Buddhist philosophy. Recounting the February struggle for peace he states,

At the time of February struggle
When I stood up resolutely
To repay the debt of gratitude to my mentor,
I made a promise
At the age of twenty-seven
With the earnest mothers of Kamata.

Firstly,
To begin with prayer,
Secondly,
To take good care of community and society
And finally,
To experience and talk intensely.

Based on our promise
We prayed and prayed,
We talked and talked
And with great sincerity
We took action
To the very end.

The February struggle
Of completely dedicated mothers
Initiated the great development
Of today s worldwide kosenrufu,
A mother s drama of victory.

Ikeda unites the image of his victorious mother Ichi who struggled to bring up her children to be the best in society with those triumphant mothers of Kamata who fought hard to create a peaceful society through worldwide kosenrufu. Ikeda creates a model of dedicated mothers who work sincerely for family, community and society to bring world peace.

Universalizing the Concept of the Mother

Both Whitman and Ikeda are involved in the larger goal of creating the identity of a global spiritual democracy with values of wholesome maternity, life giving strength celebrating the virtues of purity, goodness and beauty. Whitman uses the Quaker idea of inner light while Ikeda employs the Buddhist belief in human revolution. Both the poets present the concept of the mother as unifying cultures, and transcending them, into a cosmic principle of life.

Cultures in general possess an evaluative discourse and tend to judge human actions based on a set of assumptions, which cannot be rationally or conclusively argued. Therefore, an evaluative discourse is not something contingent to either an Anglo-American or Japanese ethos.[16] It transcends the specificity of culture and civilization. There is a categorical moral injunction in both Ikeda and Whitman to respect and value the essential and primordial identity of the mother as life giver and sustainer of the earth. We have to accept this moral argument per se in order to evaluate their essential merits in eulogizing the concept of the mother.

The concept of the mother in both poets is directly connected to their worldview, philosophical position and notion of time. The image of the mother in both poets is harnessed for many purposes ranging from nationhood and maternity to impermanence and eternity. In the poem Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood Whitman talks about immortal breasts, Mother of All, representing the muscular identity of the American States. Here he presents the immortal breasts as an emblem of general maternity, by revealing to us,

Out of thy teeming womb they giant babes ceaseless procession issuing,
Acceding, taking and giving continual strength and life.[17]

Whitman s belief in the immortality of motherhood arises from his belief in the Christian concept of the immortal soul and the representation of life through continuity of past, present and future. In the *Leaves of Grass* Whitman interrogates the concept of immortality and reality thus,

How can there be immortality except through immortality?
How can the ultimate reality of visible things be visible?

How can the real body ever die?[18]

The three questions transform an uncertain concept into an indubitable fact and provide a meaning to birth and death.

Ikeda writing in the Buddhist tradition is well aware of the impermanence and eternity of life. In his speech, The Enduring Self he states,

> Buddhism teaches that all things will pass and that death must be faced with open eyes. Even so, the Buddha was not a prophet of resignation, but a man who had attained full understanding of the Law of impermanence. He taught the need to face death and change without fear, because he knew that the immutable Law is the source of life and of value. None of us can escape death, but Buddhism leads us to see that behind death is the eternal, unchanging, greater life that is the Law. Secure in the absolute faith that this is the truth, we can face both our own demise and the impermanence of all worldly things with courage.[19]

Ikeda s belief in the undying greater life of the Law gives his poetry the courage to transcend impermanence. He is able to see an immutable existence beyond death that can be universalized in its perception. And since the notion is the center of this vision, his poetry is the most powerful representation of impermanence and immutability.

Whitman comes close to the idea of Ikeda when he attempts to create the best culture of universalism where the true child of America will bring joy to its mother can be understood through his following comment,

> The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect aiming to form, over this continent, an idiocrasy of universalism, which true child of America, will bring joy to its mother, returning to her in her own spirit, recruiting myriads of offspring, able, natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout believers in her, America, and with some definite instinct why and for what she has arisen, most vast, most formidable of historic births, and is, now and here, with wonderful step, journeying through Time.[20]

The mother possesses the power to create the most formidable of historic births and make human existence immortal. Whitman constantly strove to resolve his own Victorian confusion by representing the mother in all her cosmic wholeness.[21] Ikeda does not share the Victorian confusion with Whitman but presents the postmodern mother as dynamic, full of vigor and out to change the world. Ikeda s mothers are mothers rooted in their home and community but at the same time looking at the world with hope. They are fired with the goal of world peace. These are the mothers of Kamata, mothers in different parts of the world who are following the Buddhist way to bring a lasting peace by including the global in the local.[22] Both the poems on mother by Ikeda, included at the beginning of the essay, highlight the universalizing concept of the mother that the poet wishes to offer to the world as both hope and ideal.

War and Peace

The importance of the mother in Whitman and Ikeda acquires greater significance when connected to the opposing themes of war and peace. For both Whitman and Ikeda peace is beautiful and natural. In The Sleepers Whitman writes,

Peace is always beautiful,
The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.
The myth of heaven indicates the soul,
The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it appears less, it comes or it lags behind,
It comes from its embower d garden and looks pleasantly on itself and encloses the world.

Even if peace is a myth like the Christian concepts of heaven and soul, it nonetheless appears as beautiful and graspable as the moon. Our hope in peace waxes and wanes like the moon, but our soul remembers the peace of the embower d garden from whence it came. It looks at the world pleasantly, enclosing it in the believable concept of peace.

Enclosing the world in a pleasant garden of peace, Whitman abhors war that transforms the warm mother-son relationship into an elegy. In Drum Taps, he underscores the elegiac relationship of mother and child during war:

The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses his mother,
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him,)
The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding, clearing the way,
The unspent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowds for their favorites,
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along, rumble lightly over the stones,
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,
Soon unlimber d to begin the red business;)
All the mutter of preparation, all the determin d arming,

The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medicines,
The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in earnest, no mere parade now;
War! An arm d race is advancing! The welcome for battle, no turning away;
War! Be it weeks, months, or years, an arm d race is advancing to welcome it.[23]

Whitman builds an objective correlative of an armed race preparing earnestly for the red business of war, sacrificing the warm relationship between mother and son.

Ikeda too refers to the modern battle of the Second World War that took away the best sons of Japan leaving behind lost and lamenting mothers. In Symphony Ikeda writes,

The war enclosed the sons in their prime
Took them to the battlefield.
My mother together with my father
Appealed to them in admirable voices.

One person from one house
Was sent as a soldier,
This was enough!
But from a house where nobody could go
Nobody was sent,
From my house as many as four
Were sent to the battlefield....

The eldest son
In Burma (present day Myanmar)
Died in the war,
He was still young at twenty-nine.

During the war
The mother in a militant country
Is thoroughly eulogized,
But in the dark hour of defeat
People change quite abruptly,
And in the houses of foolish soldiers
The mother seems to be ridiculed.

The war,
Too cruel,
Wailing mothers.

But the old and poor mother
At anytime
Did not forget
Her smiling face.

War is seen not only as a common national tragedy but a personal loss where the eldest son of the Ikeda family died in Burma at the age of twenty-nine. Yet misguided soldiers ridicule the sacrifices of wailing mothers. The antiwar rhetoric of both Whitman and Ikeda, though arising from different literary and religious traditions, nevertheless carry the same humanistic and spiritual tenor prioritizing the integrating and peace-making role of mothers.

Perhaps this is to do with the elemental powers mothers possess that force them to look beyond narrow ideological paradigms into a larger philosophical world that includes all humankind. In From Noon to Starry Night, Whitman celebrates this primordial power that mothers possess,

Behold a woman!
She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer and more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the farmhouse,
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-daughters
Spun it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not wish to go,
The justified mother of men.[24]

The mother carries the melodious character of the earth goes beyond philosophy and justifies the epithet of being the mother of men. She is the voluptuous cool-breath d earth who spreads her fragrance far and beyond.[25]

Ikeda too, in his poem Mother captures this Whitmanesque sentiment unerringly. He writes,

Why do we venerate the symbol of the mother?
Why do we bend to inhale her empyrean fragrance?
It is needless to say that your love
Is more unfathomable and inscrutable
Than the ocean itself.

Your smile which reveals
The crystal of motherhood
Also hides a peace in its opacity,
A peace buffeted by contradictory feelings,
Opposing ideologies,
Labyrinthine confusion,
But returns more often to its natural orbit.

No philosopher s logic can exceed your logic,
No saint s words can be more melodious than yours,
Though there might be people
Whose intellect may seem superior to yours
But this is just a figment of the imagination,
An illusion of this world.

Surely whenever they meet a deadlock,
They would listen to your earnest voice
Return to their true origins
And develop new ability.

The empyrean fragrance of the mother, the unfathomable and inscrutable power of her love and the melody of her words guide us through opposing

ideologies and labyrinthine confusion. She helps us to return to our natural orbit whenever we face a deadlock.

The beauty and purity of the mother can be either physical and spiritual or both. Whitman revels in the memory of a red squaw who visited his mother once, a woman of wonderful beauty and purity. He writes,

A red squaw came one breakfast time to the old homestead,
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-bottoming chairs,
Her hair, straight, shining, coarse, black, profuse, half-envelop d her face,
Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look d in delight and amazement at the stranger,
She look d at the freshness of her tall-borne face and pliant limbs,
The more she look d upon her she loved her,
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she cook d food for her,
She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle of the afternoon she went away,
O my mother was loth to have her go away,
All the week she thought of her, she watch d for her many a month,
She remember d her many a winter and many a summer,
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.[26]

Whitman celebrates the elegance and beauty of a tall Indian woman with thick, straight black hair, elastic step and exquisite voice. He makes no distinction between Caucasian and Native Indian, but includes her beauty in creating a beautiful and multicultural America that transcend racial divide.

Ikeda too celebrates the beauty and purity of mothers in his poem Mother, thus,

> No, it is not
> Mona Lisa s smile,
> Nor the luminosity of Venus,
> But the nondescript face of ordinary people
> Who challenge to procure a living,
> The small, glorious and friendly face
> Of those who overcome sorrows,
> The face of mothers which possess
> All the beauty of history.

Ikeda emphasizes that the beauty of the mother is neither the enigmatic smile of Mona Lisa, nor the radiance of Venus but the small, glorious and friendly face of ordinary people that have overcome sorrows. The true beauty of mothers lies in their friendly smile and ability to overcome adversity.

Cherishing the Mother

Friedrich Nietzsche points out that the image of the mother determines our dealings with women. He asserts that,

> Everyone bears within him a picture of woman derived from his mother; it is this which determines whether, in his dealings with women, he respects them or despises them or is in general indifferent to them.[27]

Both Whitman and Ikeda assume certain attitudes, preferences, feelings and moral judgments vis- -vis mothers in their poetry. There are undoubtedly Foucauldian traces of their memories, pieties, and anxieties in their discourse on mothers. There are murmurs of insubstantial immortalities in their representation of mothers.[28] And this, at times, opens them both to the charge of emotivism and moral conservatism.[29] However both attempt to support their moral judgments with factual and autobiographical or biographical details. Whitman finds an earthiness, fecundity and primordial originality in matriarchal women, while Ikeda sees in them tenacity, generosity, altruism and elemental richness. Both the poets discover a moral law in their concept of the mother, something that possesses an unconditional categorical character. [30] It therefore becomes vital on our part to praise and cherish the mother either as Biblical obligation, Kantian duty, Kierkegaardian ethical, Buddhist exhortation or simply as a literary imperative if we are to understand the worldview of both the poets and participate in their emotive evaluation.[31]

The Monologue and *Dokuhaku*

Eulogizing the mother generates emotions in the two poets, which justify the victory of the beautiful over the monstrous, and this according to Nietzsche creates the grand style.[32] The grand and expansive monologue and *dokuhaku* seem to have had a deep influence on the poetry of Whitman and Ikeda. The tradition of the monologue arrives in their poetry from perhaps different sources, in the case of Whitman from the Christian and Victorian traditions and in the

case of Ikeda from the *Kojiki*, *Nihongi* and the Buddhist traditions.[33] Ikeda is aware of the tradition of the *Kojiki*, which, according to Hideo Kanda, was deeply influenced by the narrative techniques of the *Lotus Sutra*, *The Vedas* and Vimalakriti s *Nirdesha Sutra*.[34] Though the tradition of longer poems in Japan is rather scanty, the works of Doibansui (1871-1952) especially his longer poem, The Falling Star in Autumn and Wind on Gojyogen (Hoshiotsu Shuhu Gojyogen) had a deep influence on young Ikeda who as a member of the Young Men s Division once sang a song from it before his mentor Josei Toda.[35] This would lead us to believe that Ikeda s longer narratives may owe their origin to the longer narratives in the Japanese and the western traditions.[36]

The Lotus Sutra employs a prose and verse combination where the same person says the same thing twice. The process of repetition helps to reinforce the poetic idea. The monologue is used as a rhetorical device in Whitman to either soliloquize or praise the subject often tempered with logic and intellectual arguments.[37] It is an attempt to both humanize the subject and create an egalitarian, democratic environment. Whitman employs both the monologue and free verse to construct the identity of the young American nation.[38] He quotes from the English Bible, paraphrases and alludes to it to create a prophetic Christ-like voice that can be both human and divine.[39] In a perceptive essay entitled, Biblical Echoes in Whitman s Works, Gay W. Allen points out that the Bible has had a very significant influence on his style and poetic technique.[40]

The Whitmanesque free verse, democratic ideal, strong individualism, expansive monologue and colloquial idiom entered Japanese poetry liberating a rather narrow and straightjacketed literary tradition.[41] During this time Japan was growing as a young democratic nation, its constitution framed in 1886. The Japanese literary world could understand the aspirations of Whitman for his new

democratic country through translated versions of his poetry. However as literary critic Yuji Kami points out, immediately after creating an enlightened constitution, Japan entered monarchial absolutism in the next four decades, where Whitman s democratic ideal fell into disuse, till it was once more revived in the postwar years. It was during this time that the young Ikeda read Whitman incorporating some of the latter s ideas into his poetry.[42]

It is also at this time that Anglo-American ideas pertaining to social liberation, freedom and human rights reached Japan energizing the works of many Japanese writers. Some women activists such as Hiratsuka Raicho (1886-1971) harnessed these ideas to construct the modern identity of Japanese women. They called for the emancipation of women through such groups as Seito.[43] Women in Japan still did not enjoy the freedom that their compatriots did in Europe or America. Perhaps they shared the same ethos as Whitman s women did in the late nineteenth century. This becomes another reason for Ikeda to praise the noble virtues of mothers and restore to them their rightful claims of being the center of the home and society.

In Ikeda the monologue or *dokuhaku* serves both to praise and instruct, using arguments from literary critics, political leaders and educationists and also exhortations from religious and cultural texts. At the same time Ikeda uses the freedom of the colloquial idiom to touch the hearts of his readers with immediacy and force. Ikeda s dexterity to move from a didactic and majestic voice to a colloquial and personal idiom ensures that the reader remains enthralled by the spoken voice and empathizes with the poet. His poetry carries with it harmony, proportion, and Buddhist moderation embracing conflicting ideologies and presenting a golden model of poetic representation.[44] He extols the virtues of purity, goodness and beauty and elevates the position of the human

being through the representation of the mother.

Spiritual Democracy

In a world wrought by the inequality and discrimination that culminated in the Civil War, Whitman still believed that if a political democracy was not possible a spiritual democracy was a certainty. His belief in a spiritual democracy was a subtle combination of transcendental Quakerism, Hegelian dialectics and the syncretistic traditions of the world. Ikeda too transcends the narrow world of religious belief and addresses a global audience through his poetry and prose. He too believes in the cosmic and moral unity of the peoples of the world who seek their happiness and well being of the planet they inhabit.

Commenting on Whitman s concept of spiritual democracy Alonzo Myers writes,

> Whitman remains, abroad and at home, the poet of political democracy and social freedom, the advocate of certain strange personal modes of behavior, in spite of the fact that a sober analysis of *Leaves of Grass* proves that the Whitman of 1855, convinced that he had a large mission to fulfill, brought to world literature a new and profound interpretation of life in terms of an inner, spiritual democracy, an interpretation which has often been so completely overlooked that Whitman s brief period of fame as the poet of adolescent America, already past its zenith, seems to approach decline. Nor will he remain the poet of the present and of the future as well as of the past, unless we turn our attention to this spiritual democracy, realizing that he is the poet, not of a social and economic period, but of an America that never dies.[45]

Myers is convinced that Whitman s undying reputation as the true poet of America rests more on his ability to represent the spiritual democracy of America than on the adolescent hedonism that he created during his lifetime. Myers is writing against the grain of accepted traditional criticism of Whitman, which sees his contribution on a somewhat superficial level. George Santayana s interpretation of Whitman s poetry is perhaps the best representation of this misconception. Santayana says that Whitman s writings was based in the sunshine of perception and wallowed in the stream of his own sensibility. Santayana believes that for Whitman the world has no inside and therefore in his writings we see a phantasmagoria of continuous visions, vivid, impressive, but monotonous and hard to distinguish in memory. [46] However modern critics see, as Myers does, a warm inside in Whitman s world, which is filled with human values. [47]

Ikeda s poetic world is also based on the concept of a spiritual democracy, which partakes of an inner spiritual life. Developing a strong inner self allows us to perceive the attachments to the world in practical terms and use them well. This according to Ikeda would mean a transcendence of the world. He writes,

> The Lotus Sutra, the highest teaching of Buddhism, speaks of the need to guide living beings and cause them to renounce their attachments. The most profound commentary on this piece of scripture tells us, The word renounce should be read perceive. It is not enough simply to liberate oneself from attachments; we must also regard them clearly and carefully in order to see them for what they really are. Hence, transcending the world means establishing a strong inner self that will enable one to make proper use of any attachments.[48]

Ikeda is of the firm conviction that it is not by renouncing attachments but by perceiving their true nature and developing a strong inner self that we are able to lead a better practical life. His spiritual democracy is not dreamy or ethereal but practical and wise celebrating human existence.

Whitman s poetry participates in the equality and celebration of man and woman, as he believes, that even if the outer world is unequal, the inner world is perfectly equal. In Unfolded out of the Folds he writes,

> A man is a great thing upon the earth, and through eternity, but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman;
> First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped in himself.[49]

The fusion of the sexes is only possible on a higher level where the Hegelian dichotomies are acknowledged and then transcended to fuse into a unifying whole. The interpenetrating of the humanizing aspects of man and woman, highlighted through words like greatness and shaped, reveal to us a poet and thinker who is addressing his audience against the duality of his vision, revealing the quintessence of human existence.

Ikeda too celebrates the mercy and love of the mother in the poem by the same name, transcending language, race and ideology to unite humanity in a common feeling of brotherhood. He writes:

> Mother who incarntes and symbolizes mercy,
> Is not fettered by differences of linguistic representations,
> Or the cold cliff of racial discrimination,
> Nor by competing ideologies,

> But resemble a small bucolic path.
> For the single common feeling of humanity
> Is nothing but a mother s love.

He advises mothers to use their sagacity and own reformation to transform the dark and narrow society. He encourages the to freely play/On the luminous strings of unparalleled music and create a century of humanity.

Ikeda s Appraisal of Whitman

As mentioned earlier the impact of the poetic thought and sensibility of Whitman on young Ikeda was tremendous.[50] Whitman brought in a cosmic vision of man and nation. He synthesized the hitherto opposing concepts of nature and technology. Whitman created an unadulterated style where every rush of feeling was welcome; every word had a place in the lexicon of experience. Here was poetry for young Ikeda, which was both spontaneous and fortifying. Here was a poet whose eyes burned with the passion of things unsaid. Here was a poet who expressed the tragic consequences of the Civil War and confronted the fact of death bravely.

In a collection of essays entitled *Watashino Jimbutukan* (My View of Personality) published in 1978 Ikeda reflects upon the life and poetry of Whitman. In the essay entitled Whitman s Praise of Human Beings Ikeda analyzes the central metaphor in the *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman s integrative philosophy of nature and technology, his uninhibited style, his intense personality and his confrontation with death.[51]

Analyzing the *Leaves of Grass* Ikeda uses Whitman s interrogative metaphor of

the child as grass to highlight the Christian and Buddhist visions of the cosmos in both its micro and macro dimensions, thus identifying areas of connection between the two worldviews.[52] Ikeda writes,

> A child said What is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands,
> How could I answer the child? I don t know what it is anymore than he.
> I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.
> The child asks asking such question is quite radical, though only a child could ask such a question. Adults, whose minds are not so pure, may not be able to ask such a question. But the child does not know that he himself is the answer. It is the child himself who is the grass. He is born from the earth and grows in the sunlight. Also Whitman notices the color green. The color green signifies the innocence, hope, fearless, vividness and youth that is the precious clothing of the grass. The child should also have this clothing. Also green is Whitman s color and he is above all a person who loves nature and lives in it.

For Ikeda, Whitman is above all a poet of nature who does not see technology as an antithesis of nature but a method created by man to sustain and investigate life. This is something quite radical in late nineteenth century America where there was a clear division between nature and technology.[53] The Romantic poets in England had created this split, which was tacitly accepted by the Victorians who were unable to see the world as a systematic whole. Ikeda sees in the oeuvres of Whitman a fine intermixing of man and nature, a big cosmic embrace that includes everything from the humblest creature to the most profound technological invention. Ikeda explains about this aspect of Whitman in the following manner,

> Whitman made many poems about nature but his nature does not contradict the material civilization as it was created with the agreement of human beings. Whitman loved human nature and he praises the actions of human nature. He loved the earth and he loved human nature, which grows on the earth. Whitman compares himself to the blade of grass, which lives on the earth. Everything Whitman touched or did not touch became a part of him. This may sometimes be the leaves of grass.

We must recognize Whitman s Hegelian conception of the world as an evolutionary space wrought by conflict and chaos, yet aspiring through individual souls to merge with the Absolute.[54] Whitman uses the Hegelian dialectics directly in his poems by fuse seemingly contradictory feelings, ideas and thoughts. He concludes with bravado that,

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then I contradict myself,
> (I am large, I contain multitudes)

First Whitman acknowledges contradiction in human thought then bravely transcends categories, ideologies and religions in an attempt to contain multitudes.

Ikeda also praises the unadulterated instinctive style of Whitman where there is a rush of feeling, an uninhibited flow of words. This is contrasted with the belabored style of poets across the Continent. This was perhaps one reason why Whitman was not accepted in Europe, though within America, writers, such as Emerson, praised him as unique and innovative. In the same essay Ikeda explains the smooth flowing style of Whitman thus,

> Whitman s poems were so unusual in content and style. We can almost say that it has a broke meter. Many poets and critics altogether ridiculed him. The poet Whittier put the *Leaves of Grass* into the stove and Tennyson called it a monster. It was perhaps natural for these poets to do because Whitman s poems were the very opposite of the homely poems which people read by the fireplace. But there is one person who understood him well. That person was Emerson. He said that, I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy And Emerson praised Whitman s poems by saying that they were like sunbeam It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging.
>
> There is no well-proportioned beauty in Whitman s poetry. There seems to be no real selection of words. Through the translation I feel there is an overwhelming rush of feeling and spirit. I guess this would be true of the original text as well. I think Whitman wrote his poems in at one go, without rest. While walking, crying, or roaring, words emerge from his mind one after another and became a poem. Polishing the words or formality is just the thing to impede the flow of feelings. After completion of the collected poems, he polished it many times again and I think it shows that those poems were written at one go.[55]

The torrential intensity of Whitman is not limited to just his poetry but his entire demeanor and personality.

Ikeda praises the brilliance and intensity in Whitman s eyes and feels that only those who have something to say possess such burning eyes. According to Ikeda, Whitman wants to express his love for humanity. Ikeda writes that,

> But I see another phase in Whitman s portrait. It is his eyes. The eyes of a person who has an asset in his heart, are full some sort of light. Whitman s eyes also talk about many things. It is superior to the eyes of cheerful, carefree and good natured old man.

The conflict of the American Civil War had a tremendous impact on Whitman. It revealed those tragic aspects of life that became poignant in his poetry. Ikeda was still coming out from the traumatic experiences of the Second World War and therefore Whitman s poetic reactions to the Civil War had a profound effect on his poetic sensibility. Whitman made him think of the effects of war on individuals and the civil society at large. He writes,

> Formally there were some people who commented that Whitman was an optimistic poet whom America in the frontier age produced. Surely in his poems before the Civil War, he extolled idealism. And after the war too he continued to keep in which he lived out by affirming life in any tragedy. In this sense he might be called as optimistic. But it seems to me that his optimism includes some tragic echo.
>
> The agony of war and the desire for peace is not only apparent in Whitman but also in Ikeda. In the essay he quotes from the following lines from Whitman s A Passage to India, and comments,
> In his representative work in the later period Leaves of Grass there is a poem called A Passage to India. This is not solely a poem in which he spiritually seeks for India. Whitman seems to desire to return to the great cosmos that India represents. O farther, farther, farther sail! His poem ends here--life and death. In the midst of the great cruel reality, Whitman still lived optimistically and gazed at death.

I think perhaps this is the reason why Whitman s eyes talked so intensely....

Undoubtedly, for Whitman, India symbolized a return to the great cosmos. It further represented a belief that death does not signify an end to life but a transfiguration or transmigration into something else. Whitman was therefore able to observe the drama of life within a cruel reality with a sense of equanimity; he could interrogate the world with his burning eyes.

The Interrogative Style

Both Whitman and Ikeda use the interrogative style to emphasize what can be expected of any moral paradigm that prioritizes mothers. Once that is achieved they construct the concept of the ideal mother and the virtues relevant for modern society, virtues such as filial piety, obligating and devotion. The concept of the ideal mother helps both the poets to create a model of consciousness based on the liberal and social traditions of modern West.

The use of questions seem to be quite appropriate for a person like Ikeda who grew up during the strict military inquisitions of pre-World War II era in Japan. Whitman s democracy had challenged the relationship between an authoritative state and individual liberty that Ikeda was well aware of through the incarceration of Makiguchi and Josei Toda. Ikeda responds to the modern world of narrow ideology by questioning a diseased system. He uses the interrogative method of science to represent the indeterminate epistemology of social and political belief. Both Whitman and Ikeda are aware of the fact that the spread of knowledge since and after the Renaissance has made the reader a sovereign individual who cannot be instructed or talked down from a superior position.

Creating a new urgency and expectation in him through the interrogative voice could only convince him. Therefore both Ikeda and Whitman use the questioning technique to make their poems more intimate, as if poetry was a kind of conversation between the poet and the reader. They however use the questions more to simplify than to seduce, more the converse and less to convince.

Ikeda has always been well aware of the interrogative style quite early in his writing career. Writing about the Japanese classics in 1974 he provides examples from the *Kojiki* to reveal the dynamism and intimacy of the interrogative style in Japanese poetry. For example Ikeda writes about *Ame-no-uzume* thus,

Why does Ame-no-uzume play and eight million gods laugh?
And Ame-no-uzume answered,
Because the reverend gods sit full of vigor, therefore I enjoy laughter and play.[56]

Whitman too is the master craftsman of the interrogative voice. His entire universe in based on this technique. In the *Leaves of Grass* he asks three questions the answers to which we all know:

What is man anyhow?
What am I?
What are you?[57]

For in the same poem he states,

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash d babe,
and am not contain d between my hat and boots [58]

The poetry of Whitman reveals that man is limitless, not just imprisoned in the shell of his body. Ikeda too dexterously employs the interrogative voice both in poetry and prose. In a speech entitled, A Flight of Creativity he speaks thus:

> What is the proof of life? What is the worth of a human being? What is most important in building friendships between nations and amongst peoples? To address these questions, our dealings with one another must be distinguished by a new commitment to humanism that will support the development of culture and broaden exchange among societies, while recognizing differences among us. This is the ideal proclaimed in the Magna Carta of European Universities. Institutes of higher learning throughout the world including Soka University signed that document on this, the nine-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the University of Bologna.[59]

Ikeda through his speeches and poetry preaches the message of a new humanism which is lofty, independent, cosmopolitan, and accepts differences amongst cultures. Both Whitman and Ikeda find the interrogative technique ideally suited to express the poetic argument of their thought.

The Poet s Love Elevates the Human Being

Both Whitman and Ikeda believe that poets and their poetic impulse can transform society through their love and music. Poets possess the natural ability to touch the inner chords of life and create true communication that transcends ideology and hard identity. The passion of the poet is not contingent on fortune or misfortune but strives for a peace beyond categories.

Whitman in the Preface to the *Leaves of Grass*, 1855 elaborates his conception of the role of the poet thus,

> The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winter woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse.... he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover...he is sure...he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him....suffering and darkness cannot death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth....he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love of all perfection and beauty.[60]
>
> Whitman elaborates on the role and identity of a poet and his complete love for all kinds of experiences especially the ordinary things of life such as daybreak, winter woods, or children playing. A poet s love is not irresolute or suspicious but sure and unchanging. He is not afraid of suffering, darkness, complaint, or jealousy, but certain that his love will reach fruition one day and shine with perfection and beauty.

Ikeda too feels the power of the poetic impulse shaping a new world order,

bringing about a genuine peace. He states in his lecture, The Mexican Poetic Spirit that,

> This seems a disarmingly na ve remark, yet it can teach us much. The poetic impulse and a smiling face are the most telling indications that the pathways linking the minds and hearts of people are open and functioning. We can talk about peace and cultural exchange ad infinitum, but it is almost meaningless unless there is true communication that touches the inner chords in each individual. A famous passage in the UNESCO Constitution says as much: War is born in the hearts of humankind. Therefore we must build fortresses of peace within the heart. [61]

For Ikeda the poetic spirit and a smiling face create a true communication touching the inner chords of individuals and become the foundation of peace.

Conclusion

Ikeda s poetry acknowledges the rich legacy of a transcendent Christian Quaker tradition in Whitman s poetry, but goes beyond it by harnessing the philosophical and literary paradigms of Mahayana Buddhist thought, showing that cultural incommensurability can be overcome through poetic representation.[62] From the standpoint of eternity, *sub specie aeternitatis*, both Whitman and Ikeda approach the mystery of the universe with an innate humility and then allow us to participate in the perfection and beauty of the cosmos through the transformation of the individual self and society. They offer a grand vision of the cosmos where human beings can restore wholeness through their singular effort and find new principles of integration that will determine their fate in

the coming century.[63] Both Whitman and Ikeda are confident that their eulogy of the mother, representation of the maternal mystique and songs in devotion to the mother would bring about a century of humanity where irresistible love and lasting peace will prevail. It would not be unfounded to call Ikeda, the Whitman of the modern world who is striving to bring world peace through his poetic representations.

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We received many insightful comments from Professors Waragai Takasumi and Kaneko Hiroshi of Soka University, Japan regarding the tradition of longer poems in Japanese poetry and its influence on the poetry of Daisaku Ikeda. We gratefully acknowledge their help and contribution, though they bear no responsibility whatsoever for the views expressed here or errors made.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Daisaku Ikeda, Nyoninjyobutsu-no hokan, or The Treasure Crown of Enlightenment for Women, *Seikyo Shimbun*, Sunday May 10, 2009. Ikeda writes in this essay which means that The Lotus Sutra is the sutra of victory (which brilliantly establishes women s human rights, women s dignity, and women s happiness ...The Lotus Sutra is a sutra of women s victory (p. 2).

2 See Matsumura Akira, *Daijirin*, Second Edition, (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1995). Also see Kitahara Yasuo, Kubota Atsushi et al, eds., *Nihonkokugo Daijiten*, Volume 17, 2nd edition, (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2001). They state that, one of rikugi in Shikyo courtly poems announces laws, virtues and also ancestral gods (p. 22). Similar to the Greek *kleos* is the technique of *syo* or verses praising the personality, achievement and character of men. The *syo* tradition entered Japanese verse through the Chinese poetry, which divided lines according to content. The most famous example of *syo* is the Chinese classic *Shikyo*.

3 Gregory Nagy, Early Greek Views of Poets and Poetry, in George A. Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 1; Classical Criticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1989), pp. 1-77. Nagy points out that, all Greek literature songs, poetry, prose originate in kleos, the act of praising famous deeds, (p. 9). Also see T. A. Burrow, *The Poetry of Praise*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

4 Nagy, ibid., pp. 9-12. Though both the praise poetry of Pindar and epic poetry of Homer make the act of praising or kleos as the poetic center the technique of eulogy in praise poetry

is more direct while in epic poetry it inheres in the narration of heroic deeds in the third person. Nagy notes that, In the epic poetry of Homer just as in the praise poetry of Pindar, kleos denotes the act of praising, but in epic the praise takes place by the very process of narrating the deeds of heroes, predominantly in the third person. In praise poetry, the praise is more direct: here too kleos denotes that act of praising, but the praise in this case applies to the here-and-now, narrated in the second person, (p. 12). The notion of praise leads to a larger philosophical question whether we should praise the best outcome or the best person. In Homer s *Iliad* there is a scene where people discuss the results of a chariot race and want to know whether to give the prize to the fastest, best horseman or the best person? For more details on the subject see Daniel N. Robinson, *Praise and Blame: Moral Realism and Its Applications*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). *Kleos* however does not only imply praise but also strives for renown and glory. It is therefore closely connected to what others hear about you and therefore with creating an unsullied reputation. A Greek hero could achieve *kleos* if he did great deeds even at the risk of death. With the rise of Greek polis in the classical period, this warrior ethic eulogized by Homer changed into an urban ethic of winning kleos for the city thereby bringing honor to the family.

5 Social critics seem to draw a connection between Nietzsche s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and Whitman s *Leaves of Grass* especially the shared space between the two on such themes as glorification of the senses, homage to the self, forging new identity and reconstitution of traditional virtues. However most nineteenth century romantic writers by and large would also share these values. For more details see C. N. Stavrou, *Whitman and Nietzsche: A Comparative Study of Their Thought*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

6 See Frederick B. Tolles, A Quaker Reaction to Leaves of Grass, *American Literature,* XIX (May, 1947), pp. 170-171; Frederick B. Tolles, Emerson and Quakerism, *American Literature*, X (May, 1938), p. 144. Tolles describes Whitman s Christian belief in terms of his endorsement of, and revolt against Quakerism. Also see F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941). Matthiessen believes that the Emersonian sympathetic kinship to Quakerism was a birthright for Whitman (p. 538). For more details on Whitman s relationship to and transcendence of the Quaker tradition see Lawrence Templin, The Quaker Influence on Walt Whitman, *American Literature*, Volume 42, No. 2 (May 1970), pp. 165-180.

7 See Daisaku, Ikeda, Mahayana Buddhism and Twenty-First Century Civilization, in *A New Humanism: The University Adressess of Daisaku Ikeda*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1996), p. 162.

8 D. H. Lawrence, Whitman, *Nation and Athenaeum*, 29 (July 23, 1921), pp. 616-18.

9 *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman: Prose Works 1892* Vol II, ed. Floyd Stovall, (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 372.

10 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass, A Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, Blodgett and Bradley eds., (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 632.

11 *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader s Edition* ibid., p. 97.

12 *Prose Writings of Walt Whitman*, ibid., p. 401.

13 *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Das, 2004), p. 85. See HYMN CLIX. Heaven and Earth,

1. I PRAISE with sacrifices mighty Heaven and Earth at festivals, the wise, the Strengtheners of Law. Who, having Gods for progeny, conjoined with Gods, through wonder-working wisdom bring forth choicest boons.

2. With invocations, on the gracious Father s mind, and on the Mother s great inherent power I muse. Prolific Parents, they have made the world of life, and for their brood all round wide immortality.

3. These Sons of yours well skilled in work, of wondrous power, brought forth to life the two great Mothers first of all.

To keep the truth of all that stands and all that moves, ye guard the station of your Son who knows no guile.

4. They with surpassing skill, most wise, have measured out the Twins united in their birth and in their home.

They, the refulgent Sages, weave within the sky, yea, in the depths of sea, a web for ever new.

5. This is to-day the goodliest gift of Savitar: this thought we have when now the God is furthering us. On us with loving-kindness Heaven and Earth bestow riches and various wealth and treasure hundredfold!

14 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, (New York: The Modern Library 1993), p. 345.

15 Daisaku Ikeda, My Mother, from a series of essays by Daisaku Ikeda first published in the Philippine magazine *Mirror*, in 1998. To read the essay see the following website: http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/essays/bio-essays/bio-mother.html

16 Alasdiar MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). MacIntyre states, Contemporary argument is rationally interminable, because *all* moral, indeed all evaluative, argument is and always must be rationally interminable. Contemporary moral disagreements of a certain kind cannot be resolved, because no moral disagreements of that kind in any age, past, present or future, can be resolved. What you present as a contingent feature of our culture, standing in need of some special, perhaps historical explanation, is a necessary feature of all cultures which possess evaluative discourse (p. 11).

17 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, ibid., p. 565.

18 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass, A Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, ibid., p. 693.

19 *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1996), p. 124.

20 *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman: Prose Works 1892*, ed. Floyd Stovall, (New York:

New York University Press, 1964), p. 396.

21 Myrth Jimmie Killingsworth, Whitman and Motherhood: A Historical View, *American Literature*, Volume 54, No. 1 (March 1982), p. 28.

22 Ikeda believes that the universal can be realized in the particular. See Daisaku Ikeda, A Garden of Imagination, in *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 194. He states, True universality must be sought within the particular. The infusion of the one into the other creates a state of constant tension between the two. Sustaining that tension is the task of art, whose value lies in the imaginative power to evoke the universal lying within the particular. Mahayana Buddhism orients us to the same kind of creative tension (p.194).

23 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, ibid., p. 351.

24 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, ibid., p. 576.

25 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, ibid., p. 61.

26 *Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass: The Death-Bed Edition*, ibid., pp. 532-33.

27 *Friedrich Nietzsche,, Human, All Too Human*, R. J. Hollingdale, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 150.

28 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Foucault states, Is not discourse, in its most profound determination, a trace ? And is its murmur not the place of insubstantial immortalities? Must we admit that the time of discourse is not the time of consciousness extrapolated to the dimensions of history, or the time of history present in the form of consciousness? Must I suppose that in my discourse I can have no survival? (p. 210).

29 MacIntyre sees the content of Kant s morality as conservative . Kant was seeking a moral justification to inherited maxims. *After Virtue*, ibid., p. 44.

30 MacIntyre, ibid., p. 44.

31 See Daisaku Ikeda, *A New Humanism*, ibid. Ikeda writes, The unfolding of creative life according to the Lotus Sutra, then, encompasses all the dimensions of human life in Kierkegaardian terms, the religious, ethical, and esthetic dimensions. They come together to form a whole, a dynamic cosmic current that, as it is refined and clarified again and again, calls up the image of a multi-colored top spinning faster and faster until finally all colors are blended into a single, breathtaking hue (p. 10).

32 *Friedrich Nietzsche,, Human, All Too Human*, R. J. Hollingdale, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 334.

33 The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* traditions worked within the rules of Japanese prosody. As Japanese courts acquired the New Learning from China they brought in new rhetorical devices and ways to structure longer poems. The dramatic monologue was one such method. See Robert H. Brower and Earl Roy Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 58.

34 Daisaku ikeda, *On the Japanese Classics: Conversations and Appreciations*, Burton Watson trans., (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), pp. 82-83. Hideo Kanda theorizes that the style and construction of the Kojiki was deeply influenced by the narrative techniques of

the *Lotus Sutra* and *Yuimakyo* or Vimaalakriti *Nirdesa Sutra*. The Lotus Sutra explains that in order to state this meaning again I will repeat in verse. This tradition comes from the ancient Indian *Vedas*.

35 This insightful comment came from Waragai Takasumi during a discussion on the influence of Japanese longer narrative or Ikeda s poetry. This insight was further reconfirmed by Kaneko Hiroshi regarding the influence of Japanese prosody on Ikeda s longer poems. It must be noted that the choka tradition survived in modern Japan in the works of Kubota Utsuho (1877-1967), especially in his *Horyo-no-shi* (The Death of a Prisoner). However his choka verses are an exceptional example of the revival of the choka verse form in modern Japan.

36 The choka verse form of the *Man yoshu* became a part of the Japanese narrative technique, which was revived in the Showa era by some Japanese poets perhaps based on Kakinomoto-no Hitomaro s choka.

37 Also see Edward Hirsch, *How to read a poem: and fall in love with poetry*, (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000).

38 See Yuji Kami, The Poet of the People: Walt Whitman and Daisaku Ikeda , *Studies in English Language & Literature*, No. 60, Vol. 31, No. 2 (March 2007), p.51. Kami highlights the influence of Natsume Soseki in popularizing Whitman s egalitarianism in Japan by publishing a paper in 1892. Other Japanese critics and writers such as Chogyu Takayama, Houmei Iwano, Yonejiro Noguchi, Uchimura Kanzo, Arishima Takeo, Takamura Kotaro and Shiratori Shogo were intrigued by Whitman s new ideas and style.

39 Diasaku Ikeda, *A New Humanism*, ibid. Ikeda too recognizes the indubitable influence of the Christian tradition on western worldview and art (p. 5).

40 See Gay W. Allen, Biblical Echoes in Whitman s Works, *American Literature*, Volume 6, Number 3 (November 1934), pp. 302-315.

41 Kodaira Takashi and Alfred H. Marks, Whitman in Japan, in *Walt Whitman and the World*, eds. Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1995), pp. 434.

42 Yuji Kami ibid, The Poet of the People: Walt Whitman and Daisaku Ikeda , pp. 52-53.

43 Hideo Odagiri, Nihon no hyumanizumu, in Hideo Odagiri ed., *Humanism*, (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 1964). Odagiri writes, About Hiratsuka Raicho I have mentioned before when I cited the case of a group called Seito which included her and demanded social liberation for women. Since then Jiyuminken or Freedom and Human Rights changed to emancipation and establishment of the self. This is one progress in history and also one aberration in history. p. 43

44 *Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human*, R. J. Hollingdale, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See, The poet as signpost to the future, pp. 235-36.

45 Alonzo Myers, Whitman s Conception of the Spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856, *American Literature*, Vo. 6. No. 3 (November 1934), pp. 239-40.

46 George Santayana, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, (New York: Charles Scribner s

and Sons, 1900), p. 180.

47 Alonzo Myers, Whitman s Conception of the Spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856 ibid. Myers disagrees with Santayan s assessment of Whitman and says that Whitman s world possesses a varied inside as he gives selected pictures from his own experiences encompassing positive human values. See pgs, 241-243.

48 Daisaku Ikeda, The Flight of Creativity, in *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 39.

49 *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, ibid., p. 391.

50 Ikeda has read and loved Whitman s poetry since his youth. See Daisaku Ikeda, Radicalism Reconsidered, in *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 176.

51 Daisaku Ikeda, *Watashino Jimbutukan*, (Tokyo: Ushhio Shuppansha, 1978), pp. 154-57.

52 Daisaku Ikeda, *Songs from My Heart*, trans Burton Watson, (New York: Weatherhill, 1997). The influence of Whitman, Man yoshu and the Lotus Sutra are apparent in the poem written by Ikeda called Pampas Grass:

Winds blow the way of flourishing and decay
flowered pampas grass shedding teardrops of dew,
blooming in the face of the cold wind
days of childhood
like paintings of night under full moon,
those dreams of moon-gazing
have grown forlorn now

How would friends of Man yoshu times have sung it,
how would Kokinshu friends put it in a poem?
Hakone road in twilight,
the white snows of Fuji
doaring dimly

If a delicate tracery
of the painter s brush on lacquer inlay
had not caught the fields of pampas grass,
vainly
Your scenes would have faded from sight (pp. 51-52)

53 Daisaku Ikeda, A Garden of Imagination, *A New Humanism*, ibid. Ikeda once more points to the universalizing of a scientific and technological brand of European civilization. He writes, Over the last several centuries, European civilization has disseminated a scientific and technological brand of universalism throughout the entire globe. With an unrelenting drive for efficiency and expansion, it had forcibly brought the world under its influence...The universalism of modern science is not genuine universalism. In an abstract and self-defining world disconnected from values and meaning, a culture based on science and technology

may be both pervasive and uniform, but it is no more the skin of the fruit. It does not touch the sum total of human life. Rather than being universal, it is actually a very specific and particular element, and oly one of many, in a culture (p. 189).

54 Alfred H. Marks, Whitman s Triadic Imagery, *American Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 1951). Marks points out that Whitman s indebtedness to Hegelian dialectics can be seen from the number of times Whitman uses the terms fusing, blending, uniting, joining in his poetry. (p. 99). Also see Mody Boatright, Whitman and Hegel, *Studies in English* (University of Texas Bulletin), No. 9, pp. 134-150 (July 8, 1929); and Olive W. Parsons, Whitman the Non-Hegelian, *PMLA*, LVIII, 1073-1093 (December, 1943); Robert P. Falk, Walt Whitman and German Thought, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XL, 315-330 (July, 1941); W. B. Fulghum, Jr., Whitman s Debt to Joseph Gostwick, *American Literature*, XIII, 491-496 (January 1941).

55 Daisaku Ikeda, *Watashi no Jimbutsukan*, (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1978), pp. 156-57.

56 Daisaku Ikeda, *On the Japanese Classics*, trans. Burton Watson, (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), p. 83.

57 *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, ibid., p. 88.

58 *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, ibid., p. 35.

59 Daisaku Ikeda, The Flight of Creativity, *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 43.

60 *Whitman Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader s Edition*, ibid., p. 715

61 Daisaku Ikeda, The Mexican Poetic Impulse, *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 74.

62 Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, 1976 rpt; *Choose Life: A Dialogue*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Ikeda writes, Though I am Buddhist, I feel that Saint Francis is worthy of great respect. I believe that both Saint Francis and Jesus belong in what we Buddhists call the Bodhisattva world, p. 42.

63 Daisaku Ikeda, Radicalism Reconsidered, *A New Humanism*, ibid., p. 176.